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President/Editor's message

In historical costuming, there are many sources for the information on which costumes can be based. There are a vast number of books examining how dress has changed over the millennia. There are portraits, photographs and extant examples of real clothing.

When you undertake Theatrical costuming, there is another kind of information you might want to know. What kind of person wore what kind of clothing and under what circumstances? There is a cultural anthropology nature to this line of inquiry. In theatrical costuming the nature of the individual influences the development of the costume for the character. The result is that the audience gets clues as to the personality, status, life style and cultural milieu of the person as they enter view.

All of us know from experience that differences between sub-cultures are frequently expressed in clothing choices and styles. We can probably describe an assortment of our contemporaneous groups by their assumed attitudes and their clothing. It must have always been so. We do know of a number of historical groups who were characterized by choice of clothing. The Incroyable, the Macaroni... I have fantasized about editing a book of Counter Culture Costuming. Ideally, it should include information about both the clothing and the cultural group's nature, behavior, and relationship to society.

It is in this frame of mind that I have dashed out this year's observations on Burning Man costuming.

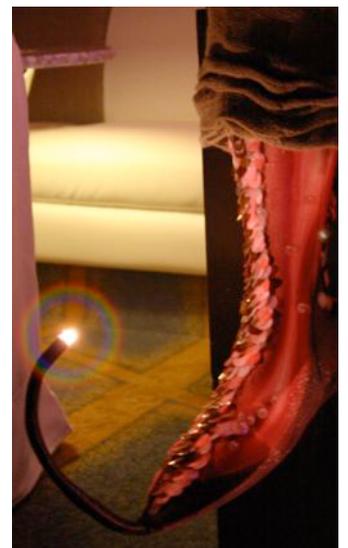
I would love to see articles on other groups, current or historical in a cultural view of costume for this Newsletter. I hope this may inspire contributions for future issues. Please let me know if you have anything to offer, or have requests or ideas.



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The Dream Fisher: Details of a Cirque Costume Dana MacDermott

On board the Summit, one of the two Celebrity cruise ships that has had a bar featuring a Cirque du Soleil production and decor, the part of the Dream Fisher has been played by Louise Boissonneault.



The Dream Fisher is a magical being who can call up dreams that project upon a cloth. She has mysterious balls that glow at her whim and with which she can entice audience members in the Bar at the Edge of the Earth. The characters



themselves are androgynous, but Louise has imbued her gently teasing character with a hint of a seductive nature.

All the costumes have integral lighting. In the case of the Dream Fisher, there are lights at the ends of the narrow tentacles that cascade from her head, and on the end of her curled feet. The electrical lighting system in one of the other costumes (Pez Erizo) on the Constellation (the other Celebrity ship that had featured the show) short circuited while being recharged, and the



costume was terminally damaged.

In the traveling shows, Cirque costumes are expertly fitted to the individual. The original concept for the *On Board Experience* (OBE) was that the roles

would rotate among the cast members. Although this was not frequently done in practice, the intent did affect the design and construction of the costumes as well as setting size parameters for the performers. The interior foot insert covers were part of the adaptability.





These costumes begin with Lycra construction, for mobility and the accommodation for the varying shapes of the performers. Cirque hand paints its creations, and applies surface details. Each costume has a palette; the Dream Fisher is pink, purple and burgundy.



The general oceanic theme of the show determined the nature of the design and decoration. Three of the characters, including the Dream Fisher, are masked; the remaining two are more human. The three creatures evoke undersea images, while one of the two “humans” is enclosed in a stylized deep sea pressure suit.



The Dream Fisher's pants and hat can be identified as silk even in photograph. A similar material is used for the garments of one of the other characters. As would be expected with Cirque's esthetic, the costumes utilize similar materials in accessories to unify the feel.

The costumes blend beautifully with the low light, and projections and with the movement and behavior of the actors to create the magic for which Cirque du Soleil is known.



Puppetry and Costuming: Part 1

What is a Puppet and Why Would I Use It?

By Kathleen O. David

Puppetry has been described as an inanimate object moved in a dramatic manner by human agency. A puppeteer is an artist who has to have an extensive skill set which can include sculpting, needlework, carpentry, jewelry making, knitting and millinery and assume the roles of actor, writer, director, electrician, and set designer. Puppetry is basically folk art that has from time to time become the "in" thing to see and be seen at. Puppetry and costumes have gone hand in hand since the first puppet shows were put on. We get our word marionette from the Middle Ages when it was decided in France that no one (much less a woman) was holy enough to play the Virgin Mary so they had a doll on strings to portray the Blessed Virgin and called it Little Mary or Marionette. More recently Jim Henson was well known for putting together people and puppets and performing with both.

I got into puppetry at an early age. My mother thinks I was about 2 when I picked up my Wizard of OZ hand puppets she got me by purchasing Downey Fabric Softener. I started seriously building them when I was a teen but stopped when I started stage-managing pretty much full-time.

After graduating from the Yale School of Drama I found myself back in Atlanta for a short time. While there I helped out a friend in constructing a bunch of hand and rod puppets for a class he teaches on basic puppet manipulation. I took a couple of puppets as payment for the work. One of these I turned into a Captain Jean Luc Picard puppet from Star Trek: The Next Generation. I entered him in the costume call on a whim at a Magnus Opus Con a.k.a. MOC as Star Trek: The Muppet Generation and won for most humorous. Since then I have incorporated puppetry and puppetry techniques with many of my costumes.

Puppetry allows a costumer to create or recreate characters that do not fit the two legs, two arms, and head mold. One costume that I saw which stuck with me was a costume from the first Alien movie. The contestant had done a very good job of recreating the outfit based on the film which had been released that year. He came onto the stage with the scary music going clutching his stomach and lurching around for a bit. Then he stood up and screamed as a chest-burster came out of his torso. He and the little alien sang 'I got you under my skin' and had the audience in the palms of their hands. What he had done was the arm across his torso was a fake and he had his left arm in the puppet that he and a friend had made out of a latex slush mold. They had gone to see the movie quite a few times and sketched frantically in the dark to recreate that moment. Yes, this was before VCRs and DVDs so if you wanted to see a costume more than once you paid for your movie more than once. (Unfortunately I no longer have the picture that I took of this costume.)

There are four types of puppets. All others are combinations of the prime puppets. These are shadow, hand, rod and string. From these you can make hand and rod puppets or string and rod puppets or full body puppets. Full body puppets are the form most often used in costume calls or masquerades.



A full body puppet is different from a costume. Barney is an example of a costume. Big Bird is an example of a body puppet. There is nothing in or on Barney that is not being operated the way that the human body operates. The jaw is attached to the operator and is moved by moving the jaw. Big Bird's mouth is operated by hand with the left hand of the puppet being fixed to the body or by the left hand of the puppet is being operated by a 2nd puppeteer or a monofilament run through to the right hand. [Barney is copyright Lyric Studios and Big Bird is copyright the Children's Television Workshop.]



Burning Man Dress

Dana MacDermott

This year at Burning Man, I came to the conclusion that there are three distinct categories of dress in the Black Rock culture. There is the mundane wear, clothing that would be appropriate in any hot climate (daytime) or cool casual climate (nighttime). The second category is the Burning Man style of clothing and the third is costume.

Last year, I commented on men in skirts. As of this year, I would consider that the utilikilt <http://www.utilikilts.com/> has transitioned into the mundane category of dress, as I have begun to see them in more daily circumstances. This year's entry into commercially available Burning Man apparel is the pod belt. It is worn at Burning Man in a rather different fashion than in the every day environment.



Costumes are generally self-evident.

They are entirely created for an overall consistent appearance, and may or may not be comfortable and/or practical.



Most interesting culturally is the Burning Man look. This category encompasses attire that would not be seen in other social settings, with a few exceptions. In this category fall the nudity, body painting, fetish wear, lingerie, cross dressing, and the wild patterns, colors, glitz and oddities that combine to give the Playa populace its distinct appearance. Most of this is the assembly of disparate elements of current and vintage clothing. Covering the human body is not considered to be a requisite for socially appropriate appearance. In this sub culture, it is simply not an issue. Individuals clothe or do not according to their comfort. I sat one afternoon in front of our centrally located theme camp and did a rough count of the passers by. The Burning Man look was evident on approximately one half of those who walked or rode past my corner.



